



Nation Building in South Korea: Koreans, Americans, and the Making of a Democracy

Gregg Brazinsky

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Nation building has been a ubiquitous component of American foreign policy during the last century. The United States has attempted to create and sustain nation-states that advance its interests and embody its ideals in places ranging from the Philippines to Vietnam to Iraq. At no time did Washington engage in nation building more intensively than during the Cold War. The United States deemed capturing the loyalties of the vast regions of the globe emerging from colonialism as crucial to the struggle against Communism. To achieve this end it launched vast efforts to carve diverse parts of Asia, Africa, and Latin America into reliable "Free World" allies. U.S. officials believed that, by providing the right kinds of resources, they could stimulate economic development and democratization in regions where neither of these phenomena had made significant inroads. This book examines one of the most extensive, costly, and arguably successful of these efforts - South Korea. Throughout these chapters, I have sought to demonstrate the agency of South Koreans in determining the ultimate impact of the United States on their society. To the extent that the U.S. influence could be called hegemonic, American hegemony was a dialectical process that Koreans played a significant role in shaping. To emphasize this point, I have approached the process of nation building from both sides through the use of American and Korean sources. This analysis makes it clear that the evolution of the South Korea we know today did not entirely reflect the will of Americans or Koreans. It was achieved only through constant negotiation between the two.

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